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ABSTRACT

This study investigated conflicting attitudes toward diversity among college of education faculty at one metropolitan, southwestern university, focusing on their personal attitudes toward ethnic diversity. The study looked at whether they could simultaneously hold progressive and traditional values, egalitarian and individualistic attitudes. This coexistence is referred to as "aversive racism." Participants were 104 full-time faculty. Their ethnic makeup was predominantly Caucasian, with some African Americans and Native Americans and some of mixed ethnic makeup. A total of 51 percent completed a survey instrument that provided prompts reflecting the dual attitudes of individualism (traditionalism) and egalitarianism (progressivism). The study attempted to determine whether individuals who responded more agreeably to the progressive/liberal statements would also respond in agreement with the more traditionalist/conservative statements. Data analysis indicated that faculty members held conflicting attitudes, which could result in "aversive racism." (Contains 19 references.) (SM)

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Paradoxical Attitudes among a College of Education Faculty towards Ethnic Diversity

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Abstract

Acceptance, and tolerance have become entwined with issues of educational obligations and values. Higher education in general and colleges of education in particular find themselves participating in this debate with ever increasing discord. The voices among higher education faculty are as divided as those from the political arena. Ethnic diversity can cause conflicting attitudes between and within individuals; a traditional belief in individualism, self-reliance and personal responsibility as opposed to a progressive conviction in egalitarianism of unattained equality. The question which focused this study was whether or not individuals simultaneously could hold progressive and traditional values, egalitarian and individualistic attitudes. Such coexistence is referred to as "AVERSIVE RACISM". Faculty of a college of education of a southwestern metropolitan university completed a Likert-type scale identifying such conflicting attitudes towards diversity. Data were analyzed along typical ethnic lines along with designations of multiple ethnicity and a position of race as irrelevant. Results support the presence of aversive racism among faculty responsible for preparing future educators.

Paradoxical Attitudes among a College of Education Faculty towards Ethnic Diversity

Acceptance and tolerance have become entwined with issued of educational obligations and values. Higher education in general and colleges of education in particular find themselves participating in this debate with ever increasing discord. Voices in higher education include those faculty members who function as students' most tangible representatives of the institution as a whole (Stassen, 1995). The institutional voices are as oppositional as those from the political arena with divergent perspectives and little productive results (Banks, 1993; Morganthau, 1994). The discourse has become increasingly passionate from all sides and has assumed more the facade of a television series on courtroom drams in which each side presents prepared briefs on its position followed by evidence (Bank, 1993). This national exchange has been conducted more through the popular press without regard to established rules of academic scholarship or debate. Issues of diversity, acceptance, and tolerance are entwined with issues of correctness of roles and educational obligations (Kozol, 1991; Spring, 1995).

Perspectives

This national debate may be characterized as a continuum: on the one end of the dichotomy is a Western traditionalist position defending individualism and individual educational achievement (Hogeboom, 1994; Gant, 1992); and the other end, a social progressive position typified by efforts to increase inclusion and egalitarianism (Gilderbloom & Golden, 1994; O'Hair & Odell, 1993). The writings span the continuum from liberally social

and inclusionary (Ogbu, 1992) to conservatively exclusionary (Howe, 1994). These extremes have resulted in ever increasing volume among the voices as emotions charge. The voices seem to be more angry and increasingly devoid of mutual respect. Greene (1993) writes of the *"passions of pluralism"* as this debate is one which cannot avoid evoking strong feelings among all who engage.

Traditionalists hold as an integral extension of the American ideal that the spirit of individualism emphasizes self-reliance, hard-work, and personal responsibility. Individualism in traditional terms acknowledges past inequities, but believes current ones are due to a lack of motivation or effort by individuals. Society is not held responsible for any hardships, but the individual whose talent and hardwork are the only determinants of success. Progressives, on the other hand, accept the egalitarian view that America has not yet attained true equality and justice. While overt, aggressive acts are less acceptable, racism and discrimination are no less a reality. Equality and egalitarianism reflect a core precept among Americans who want to support equal political, economic, and legal rights for all individuals. These conflicting values may not be mutually exclusive attitudes. Such coexistence of opposite attitudes towards race has been termed "aversive racism" by Dovidio (as cited in APS, 1996).

Traditionalism. The conservative traditionalist voices stress the threats multiculturalism and diversity present to the abstract concept, America, and to the confusion of educational curricula (Hogeboom, 1994) along with the American ideal of individualism emphasizing self-reliance, hard-work, and personal responsibility. This position defends the dominance of

0western civilization as the basis for all educational focus to be on Western history, literature, and culture. The western traditionalists argue that the inroads made during the 1960's and 1970's by social reformers upon educational curricula lie at the root of America's economic failings of the 1980's through lower education standards which resulted in lower achievement by America's youth. The position cites low test scores, low achievement when compared to other industrial nations, and unemployability of graduating seniors as causes of America's economic woes. The attack on public education found an audience with A Nation at Risk (1983) from the Commission formed by Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell under President Ronald Reagan (Parker & Parker, 1995). Under President George Bush, Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander worked to develop national standards of excellence from a traditionally Western based curriculum tied to national assessments of all American school students (Ravitch, 1993). Hernstein and Murray's (1994) The Bell Curve added to the discussion with the position that intelligence was genetically determined and hence the structures of society which are tied to intelligence. The conclusion is that excellence in education is the right only of those who could reasonably be expected to benefit from the time, money, and effort invested. Much of this position is outlined in the Republican "Contract with America" which strives to dismantle many of the earlier reforms as inclusion and diversity are viewed as potential threats to traditional American education as a social institution responsible for developing American citizens (Hogeboom, 1994).

Progressivism. Progressives, on the other hand, accept the egalitarian view that America has not yet attained true equality and justice. Overt aggressive acts may be less common or acceptable, but the goal are not obtained. However, equality and egalitarianism reflect a core precept among Americans who want to support equal political, economic, and legal rights for all individuals. The progressive voices call for inclusion of long disenfranchised groups (Scheurich, 1993). Even John Dewey call for the *"the Great Community"* of learners (cited in Parker & Parker, 1995). No one is immune to the passions surrounding this issue. Individuals frequently perceive the impassioned exchanges as *"confusion and cacophony"* (Greene, 1993). Kantor and Lowe (1995) trace the emergence of federal education policy from the New Deal through the Great Society as linked with the issue of a social agenda of inclusion. President Johnson's speech to Howard University delivered in June 1965 stressed that *"despite the court orders and laws"* the majority of African Americans continued to live in *"another nation"*. In fact, education was at the forefront of the Great Society's antipoverty programs of the 1960's including Job Corps, CETA, Head Start, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Parker & Parker, 1995).

A Model of Racism. While these positions may seem to be mutually exclusive, upon closer examination, traditionalism and progressivism may actually co-exist within an individual. Faculty members in higher education tend to be among the most liberal citizens in America (Ladd & Lipset, 1976); Stassen, 1995). However, these liberal faculty members also are strongly vested in the principle of individualism particularly in the belief that merit and the

rewards which result from merit (Stassen, 1995). As Stassen explains, faculty "support for egalitarian principles and its allegiance to the merit principal has created conflict" (p. 367). Stassen offers a model of the conflicting nature of the dual attitudes of egalitarianism and individualism. Is it possible for a single person to simultaneously believe in the moral rightness of 1) hardwork and earning what is obtained, and 2) equality for all. Dovidio (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) call this coexistence of conflicting racial attitudes *"aversive racism"*.

Aversive racism is presented (APS, 1996) as being characteristics of many white Americans who possess strong egalitarian values, strong belief in individualism, and also believe that they are not prejudice. In Stassen's (1995) model, the selection of which position to utilize is dependent upon the individual's perception of social cues. Simply, if the issue is one of "earning a grade" or "being hired" then the value becomes one of individual hard work and personal achievement. On the other hand, if the issue is one of "classroom rule enforcement" or "testing reliability" then the value becomes one of equality. Stassen discusses in detail how these conflicting values are complicated by beliefs that we are not prejudice which we then devote ourselves to verifying and to honoring. At issue in this study was whether individuals who responded more agreeably to the progressive/liberal statements would also respond in agreement with the more traditionalist or conservative statements. In other words, would faculty members give conflicting reports of themselves, thereby, supporting the dual attitudes of egalitarianism/individualism.

Colleges of Education. While all of higher education is involved in these difficulty debates, colleges of education find themselves in a particularly unique position in that prepare the teachers, principals, school counselors, etc. of the future. How colleges of education respond to these conflicting attitudes impacts not only a single lecture, class, or course, but the effects will be evident for years through the actions of these same individuals as they practice what is learned upon their own students. This study did not attempt to answer which position is correct or right. Rather this study explored whether such conflicting attitudes were present within faculty in a college of education. The issue of such opposing beliefs among faculty preparing future educations would seem to necessitate a closer examination.

METHODS

The focusing issue for this study was the verification of conflicting attitudes towards diversity or aversive racism among college of education faculty at a single southwestern, metropolitan university. The question of the correctness of attitude is left to others in other arenas along with the recommendations of change. Rather, the pre-requisite step would appear to be one of recognizing existing attitudes. This study examined personal attitudes towards ethnic diversity among faculty of a single college of education. The institution selected was located in the southwest and had an enrollment of approximately 16,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Located in a metropolitan area, the college of education offered undergraduate programs in teacher education, and graduate programs in school administration, school guidance, elementary, and secondary education as well as special education, athletic

trainer, speech pathology, and vocational education. With approximately 5,400 student in these programs, not doctoral programs were available.

Subjects

One-hundred-four (n = 104) full-time faculty within the five department of the college of education served as the population for this study. No adjunct or staff members were included. The faculty completed a survey instrument with a 51% response rate; eighteen males and thirty-three females with five individuals not reporting gender. The ethnic categories included African American 7.4%, Native American 9.3%, Caucasian 70.4%, and None 13%. However, only 38.9% selected that a single ethnic classification accurately represented them.

Instrumentation

An instrument was developed which provided prompts reflecting the dual attitudes of individualism (traditionalism) and egalitarianism (progressivism). Fourteen pairs of Likert scale items were phrased to reflect these dichotomous positions and inquired regarding the treatment of individuals, the allocation of funds, courses requirements, admission requirements, and personal interaction patterns. The traditionalist/individualist position would be such concepts as "*should not spend scares funds*", "*should not require any additional courses in diversity*", "*should not increase the multicultural opportunities as we have enough*". The progressive/egalitarianism positions would be such concepts as "*should work to recruit and to retain a more racial or ethnically diverse student body*". These items were not construed to

measure psychological construct of racism, prejudice, or even aversive racism, but rather, to ascertain if contradictory attitudes described by Dovidio and Stassen were verifiable present on a single campus. In addition to the demographic information, respondents were asked to classify themselves ethnically, but also asked if they considered themselves as more realistically two or even more ethnic heritages. Additionally, an opportunity was included to indicate the belief that ethnicity as irrelevant as individuals would be considered simply American. A copy of the instrument is provided in Appendix A.

Results

The data were examined for significance among the dichotomous pairs of items. Responses were organized by the ethnic designation along with the companion item of multiple ethnic members with the resulting categories of 1)Caucasian only, 2) African American only, 3) multiple classifications, and 4) Caucasian and that race does not matter as we all simply Americans. These four ethnic groups were then treated as an independent variable and subjected to a series of simple analysis of variance (ANOVA). The items which achieved significance ($p < .15$) are presented in Table #1.

Conclusions

This study examined conflicting attitudes toward diversity among faculty at a single college of education of a metropolitan, southwestern university. Support was indicative of the presence of significant attitudes of both conflicting attitudes within individuals which Dovidio

termed *"aversive racism"*. While higher education faculty may be among the more liberal members of American society, the possible presence of any form of discriminatory attitudes towards diversity among faculty members ought to be examined more carefully. Several points may be suggested from this data. First, higher education faculty (at this single college of education) should not be assumed to be liberal and exclusively egalitarian in their approach to a diverse student body. Second, faculty members may need to confront their own contradictory attitudes towards ethnicity to allow them to deal more effectively with diverse students. Third, faculty members, like anyone, can perceive any situation from vastly differing perspectives.

These results are not offered as criticism of any faculty member, but rather to prompt reflective understanding that no one is prejudice free. Most of us hold conflicting attitudes which, when left unmonitored, can prompt us to act in discriminatory manners. An awareness of our own dual attitudes toward diversity will enable us to better respond to our students as well as accept a facet of our beliefs which we may have previously denied.

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Table #1

Results of Significant ANOVA of Items by Re-ordered Ethnic Designations

ITEMS	F	*p*
The University is doing enough and should not spend scarce funds, require any additional courses, nor increase the multicultural opportunities (we have enough).	5.38	.004
I have not experienced either personally or toward others racial prejudice at this university during the past year.	2.18	.100
I resent the University requirements to take courses about cultures, races, or ethnic differences.	3.93	.016
Teachers and professors here have no racial prejudice.	1.96	.137
Here, race relations are more of a problem than alcohol or drug use.	2.61	.065
Most people my age have some form of racial prejudice even though they won't admit it.	2.63	.064
I welcome the inclusion of coursework or other opportunities here which promotes awareness of other cultures.	2.95	.045
The people here are not prejudiced.	2.90	.047
The University should allocate funds, require coursework, and provide more opportunities to promote awareness of other cultures.	3.05	.04
Most people my age do not have any racial prejudice.	3.35	.029

*** NOTE: Ethnic groups were: Caucasian only; African American only; Multiple Ethnic Classifications (Multicultural); American with ethnicity as Irrelevant (all had also marked Caucasian)